

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

ACTION COPY

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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S E C R E T SAIGON 1164

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1967 JUL 15 AM 8 32

EXCISE

EXDIS

REF : SAIGON 1082

1. AS MENTIONED REFTTEL, I SAW [] EVEING OF JULY 14. HE HAD REQUESTED OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS WITH ME HIS CONCERN OVER CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS.

2. [] SAID THAT HE WAS WORRIED BY CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING HIS ABSENCE [] SINCE MID-JUNE AND SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED IN HIS OWN MIND HOW VIABLE THE THIEU-KY ARRANGEMENT WILL PROVE. HE CONFIRMED THAT KY HAS BEEN UNDECIDED AS TO COURSE HE SHOULD FOLLOW. HE WENT

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ON TO REPEAT MUCH THE SAME STORY THAT KY HAD TOLD ME. HE SAID PEOPLE ARE UNEASY AS TO REASONS FOR KY'S DECISION, THAT THEY ARE QUESTIONING KY ABOUT HIS PURPOSE IN STEPPING DOWN AND ASKING HIS ADVICE AS TO WHAT THEY SHOULD DO. THIS UNEASINESS AND UNCERTAINTY IS PARTICULARLY MARKED AMONG A GOOD MANY OF THE YOUNGER OFFICERS WHO HAD BEEN TALKING IN RATHER STRONG TERMS ABOUT WHAT THEY SHOULD DO. SOME WERE CHARGING THAT THE U.S. IS BACKING HUONG'S CANDIDACY.

4. I TOLD [] THAT ANY SUCH CHARGE WAS OBVIOUSLY UNTRUE, THAT AS HE WELL KNEW WE WERE BACKING NO ONE. I REMINDED HIM THAT I HAD MADE THAT VERY POINT TO KY THE PREVIOUS DAY. I THEN WENT ON TO TELL HIM IN SOME DETAIL OF WHAT I HAD SAID TO KY, EMPHASIZING PARTICULARLY MY FEELING THAT KY WAS TO BE COMMENDED FOR THE DECISION THAT HE HAD MADE, THAT, AS WITH PRESIDENT JOHNSON IN 1960, HE HAD PLACED THE INTERESTS OF HIS COUNTRY ABOVE PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS AND AMBITION. I TOLD HIM THAT I FELT THAT KY HAS MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE TO HIS COUNTRY AND THAT IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE INDEED IF HE DID NOT PUSH AHEAD WITH THE PROGRAMS TO WHICH HE IS COMMITTED AND TO WHICH HE HAD BROUGHT MUCH INITIATIVE AND SOUND JUDGMENT.

SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY []
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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Saigon
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2- SAIGON 1164, JULY 15

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5. [] AGREED WITH THIS. HE SAID HE HAD TALKED TO THIEU ABOUT HIS AGREEMENT WITH KY AND ASKED HIM HOW HE VISUALIZED HIS GOVERNMENT SHOULD HE BE ELECTED. [] ASSURED ME THAT WRITTEN AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THIEU DOES EXIST AND HE HAS SEEN IT -- QUESTION IS WILL THIEU ABIDE BY IT.) HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT KY DID NOT ANTICIPATE BEING A FIGURE-HEAD. IT WAS APPARENT TO HIM THAT THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE CLEAR THINKING OF THE PRECISE ARRANGEMENT. [] ASKED IF I HAD SEEN THIEU AND SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF I WERE TO DO SO. I SAID I HAD IT IN MIND.

6. [] CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT THERE WILL BE ANOTHER MEETING OF THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP ON MONDAY JULY 17 IN WHICH THE WHOLE RANGE OF PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE THIEU-KY CANDIDACY WOULD BE FURTHER DECIDED. HE STRESSED

THAT THIS WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT MEETING, THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS AND NOT MUCH TIME TO GET THEM RESOLVED.

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7. I TRUST THAT MY CONVERSATIONS WITH KY AND WITH [] HAVE HELPED REMOVE SOME OF THEIR DOUBTS CONCERNING OUR VIEW OF THE THIEU-KY TICKET AND THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO THEIR CAMPAIGNING ACTIVELY IN FREE ELECTIONS. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE THIEU SUNDAY EVENING (FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM VUNG TAI) AND WILL THUS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY ALSO TO PRESENT OUR VIEWS TO HIM PRIOR TO THE ARMED FORCES MEETING ON MONDAY. I HOPE THAT THIS, TOO, WILL HELP CLEAR THE AIR. I NOTE THAT IT NOW SEEMS QUITE LIKELY THAT THE BIG MINH TICKET WILL BE RULED OUT BY VIRTUE OF LIENG'S INELIGIBILITY (SAIGON 1163) AND THIS SHOULD ALSO HELP IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE. AT THE TIME IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS MEETING HAS MAJOR DECISIONS TO REACH AS TO THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN BY THIEU AND KY AND EVEN MORE BASIC DECISIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TWO MEN WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP AFTER THE ELECTIONS SHOULD THEY WIN. WE SHALL, OF COURSE, BE FOLLOWING THIS CAREFULLY.

GP-1. BUNKER
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